United Nations A/60/722–S/2006/169

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
16 March 2006

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixtieth session
Agenda items 14, 15, 24, 31, 38, 48, 52, 57, 62 and 108

Security Council
Sixtieth year

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Sport for peace and development

Sustainable development

Operational activities for development

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 15 March 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a press release for the ninety-eighth session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was held in Riyadh on 1 March 2006 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 14, 15, 24, 31, 38, 48, 52, 57, 62 and 108, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdulaziz N. **Al-Shamsi**
Ambassador
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Annex to the letter dated 15 March 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Press release issued by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its ninety-eighth session Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 1 Safar A.H. 1427, corresponding to 1 March A.D. 2006

The Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council held its ninety-eighth session in Riyadh on Wednesday, 1 Safar A.H. 1427, corresponding to 1 March A.D. 2006, under the chairmanship of His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates and Chairman of the current session of the Ministerial Council, and with the participation of His Excellency Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The Ministerial Council expressed its profound sadness over the deaths of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of Kuwait, and Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Amir of Dubai. It presented its condolences to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain on the death of his son, Prince Faisal.

The Council expressed its congratulations to the following: His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on becoming Amir of the State of Kuwait; His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on assuming the post of Crown Prince of Kuwait; His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, on assuming the post of Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and ruler of Dubai; His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, on assuming the office of Prime Minister of Kuwait; Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, on taking office as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait; and His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, on his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

The Ministerial Council commended His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, and His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Nu`aimi, for their efforts since the creation of the GCC.

The Ministerial Council reviewed the progress made since the previous session in a number of joint cooperation fields and developments relating to regional and international political and security issues.

With regard to economic affairs, the Ministerial Council considered the reports and minutes of a number of ministerial committees as well as reports on joint economic action.

The Council considered the recommendations adopted by the Electricity Cooperation Committee at its 18th meeting, held in September 2005. The recommendations included the contributions of States to the electrical grid interconnection project, the enhancement of the electricity and water database, the

start-up of the trial application of the electricity and water specifications adopted and the holding of a workshop on water rationalization as part of the activities of Gulf Water Week, in March 2006.

It also considered the recommendations adopted by the Water Cooperation Committee at its 4th meeting, held in September 2005, regarding the continuation of the detailed study of water linkage among the GCC countries and the definition of research priorities in connection with desalination and how it is to be financed. The Council approved the recommendation of the two committees that they should be combined into a single committee to be known as the Electric and Water Cooperation Committee.

With regard to cooperation in the area of petroleum, the Ministerial Council examined the minutes of the 26th meeting of the Petroleum Cooperation Committee, held in November 2005; the Committee's decisions regarding the completion of the study on the establishment of the centre for strategic studies and energy research of the GCC States; and the recommendations of the GCC States Energy Working Group and the working group charged with the follow-up of international agreements on climate change, cooperation in the field of mining projects in the GCC States and their presentation to the private sector there and cooperation between the Gulf and Europe and between the Gulf and China in the field of energy.

The Council examined the minutes of the 24th meeting of the Industrial Cooperation Committee, held in November 2005, and the matters discussed by it in connection with the anti-dumping technical secretariat, the preparation of a comprehensive export strategy for the exports of the GCC States and the preparation of the implementing regulation for the law on the uniform industrial system of the Gulf States.

It examined the minutes of the 33rd meeting of the Trade Cooperation Committee, held in November 2005, and the subjects taken up by it, including the discussion of obstacles to trade, the establishment of a Gulf e-commerce authority, the furtherance of the work of the committee of presidents of financial authorities and markets and the World Trade Organization Committee within the GCC framework.

Pursuant to the decision adopted by the Supreme Council at its twenty-sixth session, held in December 2005, regarding the project for the integration of transport sectors among the GCC States, the Ministerial Council issued instructions that the Transport and Communication Committee should be charged with studying the question from every angle and presenting the results to the Ministerial Council.

The Council examined the follow-up reports submitted by the General Secretariat on the detailed study of the water link among the GCC countries and the study of the project for a railway linking the Gulf States.

The Ministerial Council examined the note of the General Secretariat concerning relations between the GCC States and other States and international groups, and welcomed the positive results achieved so far in the negotiations between the GCC States and the People's Republic of China.

In the area of human and environmental affairs, the Ministerial Council took cognizance of the domestic measures and mechanisms adopted by member States for

the implementation of the decision of the Supreme Council concerning the extension of insurance protection to nationals of GCC States working outside their countries.

Owing to the desire on the part of the Ministerial Council to strengthen social insurance systems and support civil retirement systems in the GCC countries, the Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee was charged with following up on the proposal for the establishment of a joint investment fund for civil retirement and social insurance systems among the GCC States.

The Ministerial Council also considered the steps taken by way of follow-up to the decisions of the Supreme Council concerning education and expressed its satisfaction at the role assumed by the scout movement among the youth in the GCC countries and its contributions to volunteer and humanitarian work both within the GCC States and elsewhere.

The Ministerial Council took a look at the progress made in the various spheres of military cooperation, one of which relates to the start of the study of the proposal made by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques pertaining to the development of the Al-Jazeera (Peninsula) Shield force. It also examined the progress of work on the joint military projects on secure communications and the Cooperation Belt. The Council expressed its satisfaction over the steps taken and the studies carried out and stressed the importance of completing the remaining aspects relating to various fields of military cooperation in the light of the decisions adopted in that regard.

With regard to security coordination and cooperation, the Council reviewed the secretariat's memorandum on progress in this area in the intersessional period and expressed its satisfaction with steps taken by the Member States to implement all resolutions, in particular those relating to mechanisms established to combat terrorism and increase contacts and information exchange between security agencies. It also expressed satisfaction with the stages completed in the "smart card" project to issue a multi-use national identity card to serve as a transit link for citizens between Member States to increase commercial exchange and the flow of goods among the GCC States.

With regard to combating terrorism, the Ministerial Council praised the alertness of Saudi security personnel in successfully eliminating the remaining at-large terrorists and foiling a terrorist plot targeting a large national economic facility in the city of Buqayq that benefits the people as a whole.

The Ministerial Council stressed the need for regional and international efforts to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) on combating terrorism, as well as other relevant resolutions, and for support for the proposal to establish an international centre to combat terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Ministerial Council reviewed with great concern the satirical drawings demeaning the Prophet that had been published by certain western newspapers and others following in their wake. The Council feels that the published drawings are despicable and demeaning to Islam, that they crossed the line with respect to freedom of expression and of the press by provoking Muslims, and that they constitute a violation of human values and morals and of all religions, treaties and international norms. The Council stressed the need to respect Prophets and

Messengers, refrain from demeaning them, and repudiate extremism, violence, and racial hatred.

The Ministerial Council also condemned all the acts of violence that resulted from that episode. The Council affirmed its backing for the stance of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the steps that Organization has taken to deal with this issue, as well as for an internationally legitimate mechanism within the human rights framework of the United Nations to hold people accountable for actions that demean Prophets and everything that religions hold sacred.

The Ministerial Council welcomed the joint communiqué of the Doha round-table meeting called by Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to discuss the crisis sparked by the publication of the cartoon drawings insulting the Prophet Muhammad, which called for freedom of expression to be exercised responsibly and not used as a pretext to incite hatred, violence, or the defamation of the deeply held beliefs of any group. It welcomed the determination of participants to formulate a joint strategy to overcome the crisis and prevent its recurrence, their support for tolerance and mutual respect among religions and societies, and their request to the Secretary-General to bring the communiqué to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and the European Union. The Ministerial Council also applauded the meetings of the High-level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations in Doha, and the resulting recommendations which included a number of international appeals to strengthen the Alliance of Civilizations and to provide frameworks and methods for this purpose, with a view to creating a climate of trust between the western and Islamic civilizations.

The Ministerial Council discussed a number of important regional and international political issues, and reiterated its well-established positions, including the following:

Regarding the continued occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the three islands, the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, belonging to the United Arab Emirates, the Supreme Council affirmed the following:

- Its support for the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over its three islands, the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, and over the territorial waters, airspace, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone of those islands, as constituting an integral part of the United Arab Emirates;
- Its continued regret over the failure of contacts with the Islamic Republic of Iran to produce any positive results towards resolving the issue of the three islands, which would contribute to strengthening security and stability in the region;
- The consideration of all peaceful means towards the restoration of the right of the United Arab Emirates over its three islands;
- Its invitation to the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the efforts of the United Arab Emirates and the international community to resolve the issue through direct negotiations or recourse to the International Court of Justice.

With regard to Iraq, the Ministerial Council reviewed developments in the Iraqi situation and expressed the following position:

- It welcomed the results of the parliamentary elections, subsequent ongoing efforts, and the positive steps taken to complete the political process. It called on all Iraqi forces to form a permanent, inclusive and broadly representative national unity Government to hasten the realization of Iraq's security and stability, its ability to administer its own affairs, and its return as an effective member of the Arab world and the international community.

- It condemned recent acts of violence and the terrorist crimes and aggression aimed at holy places and houses of worship.

- It reiterated its strong disapproval of what is going on in Iraq, and encouraged national forces of all affiliations to stand as one against efforts to foment sectarian division and civil strife.

- It affirmed the continued commitment of the GCC States to pledges made to contribute to Iraqi reconstruction.

- It expressed once again its sadness at and condemnation of the deliberate mass killings of Iraqi nationals, Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees and nationals of other States committed by the former Iraqi regime, as well as the flagrant violations of human rights, Islamic and other fundamental moral principles and Arab values that continue to come to light as mass graves are uncovered.

- It stressed once again that the GCC States welcome the ongoing cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq regarding the suffering undergone by the two countries due to the inhumane practices of the former Iraqi regime towards the two brotherly Kuwaiti and Iraqi peoples.

- It urged the United Nations to continue its efforts to resolve outstanding issues such as the return of Kuwaiti property and the Kuwaiti national archives seized by the former Iraqi regime and determining the fate of Kuwaiti prisoners and prisoners of other nationalities.

The Ministerial Council reviewed developments in the Palestinian situation and recent developments in the Middle East peace process and emphasized the following:

- It congratulated His Excellency, President Mahmoud Abbas, on his success in the Palestinian parliamentary elections, whose results constituted a choice by the people that must be respected, and called on the international community to respect the desire of the Palestinian people to determine its future and exercise its choices.

- It expected the international community to adjust to these developments and pressure Israel to travel the path of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

- It called on all Palestinian forces to close ranks and harmonize their positions to face the upcoming stage, which would lead to the realization of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. This should be accomplished through negotiations to implement the road map and the adherence of both sides to signed pledges, agreements and internationally recognized resolutions, in order to overcome obstacles on both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides to mutual acceptance and resumption of negotiations.

- It demanded that the Israeli Government cease its continued aggression against the Palestinian people and its use of the techniques of economic siege.

- It called on the international community to continue to supply financial assistance to the Palestinians and not to punish the Palestinian people for exercising their democratic choice.

- It reaffirmed its support for efforts to bring together different points of view within the Palestinian political spectrum to prevent political differences from overwhelming the interests of the Palestinian people and its conviction that stability in the region required the support of the international community for Palestinian national institutions and the respect of all parties for all internationally recognized resolutions.

- It welcomed the European Union's decision to resume its assistance in the amount of €120 million to help meet the basic needs of the Palestinian people.

- It demanded that the international community, and in particular the United States administration, the European Union and the Quartet, should not pass hasty pre-emptive judgement on the new Palestinian Government; rather, they should support it.

- It called once again on the international community to take action to turn the Middle East, including the Gulf region, into a region free of all weapons of mass destruction and to induce Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and subject all of its nuclear facilities to the international inspections regime. The Ministerial Council expressed deep concern about the dangers of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and called for this problem to be solved peacefully within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Safeguards System.

With regard to Lebanon and developments in the activities of the International Independent Investigation Commission, the Ministerial Council stressed the following:

- The GCC States firmly supported the political, security and economic stability of the brotherly Lebanese people.

- It called on forces with influence in Lebanon to work together to overcome the crises and repair the rift in order to preserve the unity of Lebanon and provide security and stability.

- It called on the brotherly neighbouring Lebanese and Syrian peoples to engage in a dialogue so as to preserve the security and stability of the territories of both Syria and Lebanon.

- It urged the international community to quickly identify and bring to justice those who assassinated President Hariri and perpetrated a series of other assassinations in Lebanon.

The Ministerial Council reviewed developments in the Sudan and the worsening humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region and applauded the efforts made by the Sudanese Government to resolve the crisis in the region. It urged the international community to make greater efforts to help resolve the crisis and achieve security and peace for the brotherly Sudanese people.

The Ministerial Council welcomed the appointment of His Excellency, Abdullah Aqla al-Hashim of the State of Kuwait, as Assistant Secretary-General for Human and Environmental Affairs for a three-year period starting on 1 January 2006 and wished him every success in his endeavours.

Riyadh
Wednesday, 1 Safar A.H. 1427, corresponding to 1 March 2006